



Press release

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A worldwide net: ZEF is building an international network of alumni

The Center for Development Research (ZEF) of the University of Bonn has built up its own alumni network, consisting of former doctoral students and scientists. "Our former students and scientists are often decision makers in key positions now – in developing countries as well as in Germany and in Europe", explains Dr. Günther Manske, coordinating manager of the International Doctoral Studies Program for Development Research (IDSP) at ZEF. "Such a network enables ZEF and its partners to plan and implement future research co-operations in an even more effective way. It will also smoothen the way to put research results into practice".

By the end of 2005, the network counted 162 ZEF alumni from 43 countries. Fifty two percent came from developing countries, 21% from transition countries, and 27% from industrial states, mainly from Germany.

ZEF relies on a philosophy of "brain gain" by educating experts for developing countries. The main goal of the IDSP is to motivate a new academic generation to return to their home countries after successfully finishing their studies in Germany. Their education and their experience will enable them to contribute substantially to building up and extending academic and societal structures in the developing world. A survey of the professional careers of former ZEF doctoral students shows, that 55% of the graduates from developing and transition countries had returned to their home countries. Fifteen percent of the former students found jobs in international organisations such as the World Bank and the United Nations as well as in an international agricultural research center (CGIAR). About 11% of the graduates found a position in Germany or another OECD-country.

Zhaohua Li from China looks back positively on his experience as a doctoral student at ZEF: "I returned to China two and a half years ago. Currently I am working at Hubei University as a Professor in Ecology and Dean of the School of Resources and Environmental Science. I really thank ZEF for the excellent supervision and the academic freedom it provided to us during our education in the framework of the doctoral program."

"A unique feature of ZEF's doctoral program is its interdisciplinary focus", explains former doctoral student Khalid Khalafallah from Sudan. "This turns out to be a promising instrument for tackling complex development challenges. The interdisciplinary approach was an enlightening experience for me, which I will certainly carry along with me in the future. Also the field research proves to be a credit for job applications in the development field". Khalid Khalafallah is now a Junior Professional at the Islamic Development Bank in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.

Ms. Katinka Weinberger from Germany relates: “Conducting my PhD research at ZEF was an important phase in my career. Apart from being given the possibility to work on an interesting and relevant topic in development economics, I enjoyed the international and stimulating atmosphere there, both at student and scientist level”. Currently, Ms. Weinberger is an Assistant Scientist (Socio-Economist) at the World Vegetable Center (AVRDC) in Taiwan

“Thus, six years after the inception of the International Doctoral Studies Program for Development Research in 1999, we certainly can say that its concept proves to be successful. On the one hand we educate a new generation of academics and decision makers for developing countries, on the other, Germans qualify for an international career. Most of our former doctoral students are at the beginning or in the midst of a promising career”, adds Manske.

The main sponsors of the program are the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) as well as the Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF), further the Ministry of Innovation, Science, Research, and Technology of the Land of North Rhine-Westphalia (MIWFT), the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), the German Technological Cooperation (GTZ), the Robert-Bosch-Foundation and the German Research Foundation (DFG).

For more information please have a look at www.zef.de and www.zef.de/alumni

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